

CRISIS 10-27

NIGHT LD

BY EDWARD K. DELONG

WASHINGTON (UPI) -- THE REFUSAL OF MOST EUROPEAN ALLIES TO SUPPORT THE UNITED STATES DURING THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS MAY LEAD ULTIMATELY TO A REDUCTION IN AMERICAN FORCES AND ARMS STOCKPILES IN WESTERN EUROPE, GOVERNMENT SOURCES SAID SATURDAY.

WHILE THE UNITED STATES REGARDS ITS MILITARY ASSETS IN EUROPE TO BE PART OF AN OVER-ALL FORCE READY FOR USE IN ANY EMERGENCY, THESE SOURCES SAID, EVENTS LAST WEEK CREATED THE IMPRESSION IN WASHINGTON THAT WESTERN EUROPE LOOKS ON THEM AS RESTRICTED TO THE DEFENSE OF EUROPE.

"WE'RE GOING TO BE TAKING A HARD LOOK AT WHETHER THIS HAS LONG-RANGE IMPLICATIONS, OR WHETHER IT WAS JUST A CRISIS ANOMALY," ONE OFFICIAL SAID. "WE MAY VERY WELL DECIDE WE WANT TO PUT SOME OF THOSE FORCES (IN EUROPE) SOMEWHERE ELSE."

OFFICIALS STRESSED THAT NO DECISIONS HAD BEEN MADE, BUT SAID DISCUSSIONS NOW UNDER WAY WILL INVOLVE A SERIOUS REVIEW OF FUNDAMENTAL, TIME-HONORED U. S. ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT DEFENSE READINESS.

THE RESULT, THEY SAID, MIGHT INCLUDE CHANGES IN THE OFFICIAL U. S. POSITION AT THE TALKS ON A MUTUAL, BALANCED REDUCTION IN EAST-WEST FORCES, SCHEDULED TO START TUESDAY IN VIENNA, AND IN AN EASING OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S CONSISTENT OPPOSITION TO CONGRESSIONAL PRESSURE FOR UNILATERAL CUTS IN U.S. TROOP STRENGTH IN EUROPE.

ALL BUT ONE OF THE EUROPEAN MEMBERS OF NATO DEMANDED THAT THE UNITED STATES NOT USE ANY OF ITS BASES OR EQUIPMENT IN EUROPE TO SUPPORT ISRAEL IN THE MIDDLE EAST WAR. THE LONE EXCEPTION WAS PORTUGAL, WHICH ALLOWED U. S. PLANES TO USE A BASE IN THE AZORES AS A STOPOVER POINT IN THE EMERGENCY ARMS AIRLIFT.

ALL OTHER EUROPEAN NATO COUNTRIES AND SPAIN, WHICH IS NOT A NATO MEMBER, DELIBERATELY DIVORCED THEMSELVES FROM THE U. S. POSITION FOR FEAR OF LOSING THEIR ARAB OIL SUPPLIES, WHICH ACCOUNT FOR 80 PER CENT OF THE OIL WESTERN EUROPE RECEIVES.

SOME ALSO REFUSED TO GRANT U. S. AIRLIFT PLANES THE RIGHT EVEN TO FLY THROUGH THEIR AIR SPACE. THIS PARTICULARLY ANGERED U. S. OFFICIALS BECAUSE GREECE AND TURKEY MADE LITTLE IF ANY PROTEST ABOUT THE OVERFLIGHT OF SOVIET PLANES CARRYING ARMS TO THE ARABS.

NATO EUROPE, IN TURN, REGISTERED STRONG DISAPPROVAL OF WASHINGTON'S FAILURE TO CONSULT ITS ALLIES WHEN THE MIDDLE EAST SITUATION THREATENED TO TURN INTO A SOVIET-AMERICAN MILITARY SHOWDOWN.

U. S. OFFICIALS EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT EVENTS OF THE PAST THREE WEEKS MIGHT HAVE SIGNED A BREAKDOWN IN THE SOLIDARITY OF THE NATO ALLIANCE.

"IT IS BUT A SMALL STEP -- A SMALL STEP -- FROM SAYING NOT TO USE THOSE (U.S.) FORCES IN THIS SITUATION, TO SAYING NOT TO USE THEM TO COME TO THE AID OF AN INDIVIDUAL MEMBER OF NATO, SUCH AS GREECE OR TURKEY," ONE SOURCE SAID.

THE UNITED STATES HAS MORE THAN 200,000 TROOPS AND THOUSANDS OF TANKS AND OTHER ARMS IN WEST GERMANY, INCLUDING A 3,500-MAN U.S. ARMY "QUICK REACTION FORCE" FOR EMERGENCY USE.

THE BONN GOVERNMENT DECLARED ITSELF NEUTRAL IN THE ARAB-ISRAELI WAR AND PROTESTED WHEN AN ISRAELI FREIGHTER WAS LOADED WITH U. S. ARMS IN THE PORT OF BREMERHAVEN.

"OUR 82ND AIRBORNE DIVISION, RIGHT HERE IN THE UNITED STATES, WAS IN A BETTER POSITION TO BE USED IN THE MIDDLE EAST THAN ALL THOSE FORCES IN GERMANY DURING THIS SITUATION," ONE OFFICIAL SAID WITH SOME BITTERNESS.

"IN THE LONG TERM WE MIGHT SAY IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE TO STORE ALL THOSE TANKS I